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Children's social rights in social studies textbooks in Turkish elementary education

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Abstract

The aim of this work is to present to what extent the social rights of the children are considered in the social studies textbooks of the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades of elementary education in Turkey. All the units of the textbooks are examined with the content analysis method. In the research the analysis unit is determined as “Children's Social Rights”. This analysis unit is divided into three sub-categories as “Right to Health”, “Right to Social Security” and “Right to Education”. Frequency and percentage are used in data analysis.

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Keywords: Social studies; social rights; textbook; right to health; right to education; right to social security.

1. Introduction

Human rights issue ever-increasingly attracts attention of the world public opinion. Human rights are fundamental in the bettering and protection of the human beings. In order to explain the social right (also described as the social and economic right) which is a human right, one has to consider the development of human rights in the West. In the West, all the problems encountered until 19th century are considered as a result of not respecting the rights of the human beings and the individual who was overwhelmed by pressure in the previous periods is sought to be freed of the pressure and embellished with incontestable and inalienable rights. Accordingly, freeing the individual in political and economic fields is anticipated and “liberalism” as a doctrine started to develop. This doctrine aims at dignifying the human being and minimizing the intervention in human beings' intellectual, entrepreneurial and performative areas. Until 19th century, freedom is perceived to be a restriction in the intervention and activity domains of the state. The individual is to be free inasmuch as this constriction in state's power, and freely improve his/her moral and material being. What is expected from the state is just a negative manner such as not interfering in the individual's private sphere. This is why the 18th century perceptions of rights and liberties are called the rights of the negative status. Negative status rights, in other words civil rights or protective rights, are those which draw the lines of the rights of the people which cannot be interfered or negotiated by the state. These rights are the rights of the individual which reserve the right to a particular living space, aim at

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free development and prevent state's interference in these rights. Since these rights load the state with the duty of noninterference in individual rights, they are also referred to as negative status rights (Kapani, 1981; Mumcu, 1994). As they emerged out of protecting one's rights against the state and society, they are also defined as protective rights. Right to life, right to privacy, right to inviolability of domicile, freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of thought and expression, freedom of science and the arts, right to property, freedom of travel can be given as examples of individual rights.

However, from 19th century onwards a gradual reaction against this negative freedom concept is observed. Because till that time the rights given to people remained theoretical. In other words, while designating these rights and liberties, the individual was considered as apart from society and as an abstract entity, and the individual as a social being who copes with the daily living conditions, struggles with the problems these conditions confront one with, tries to make a living and being was ignored. For instance; the individual is vested with the right to life but the individual is defenseless against the illnesses threatening one's life, to put it differently, the individual is denied the right to health. Right to inviolability of domicile and property is vested but the individual does not have a place to live in. Right to improve the physical and moral being is vested but neither the time to go to school nor the means are given. In these circumstances, the liberal thought which prioritizes the individual, ascribes the negative, in other words, passive role to the state which means that the individuals who practically are in all sorts of material needs and deprivations are left all alone. The rights and liberties which are announced for all human beings were being availed by a minority of affluent people. Thus, two interdependent facts emerged out of rapidly changing economic and social conditions. The first one, negative status rights, is inadequate in acknowledging liberties and rights of all people and this list has to be added new rights and liberties. Second one, it is compulsory for a state to take some precautions and by leaving its passive role in not intervening in its people, guarantee the citizens' full and equal avail of the rights (Kapani, 1981; Mumcu, 1994).

Under the influence of the two facts, from 19th century on one can observe a "social" development in the content of human rights concept and in the functions of the state. Human being is no longer seen as an abstract entity but a being living in a social environment that has needs. Human being is not only to be vested the negative status rights which can be asserted against the extreme interferences of the state but also to be vested with the rights of the positive status which enables one to demand constructive conducts, service and aid from the state. In this way rights and liberties will not be a privilege of a minority but will be publicized. Therefore the state will be loaded with new duties and functions; and thus it will take all necessary cautions and serve accordingly in order to prevent its citizens from poverty and misery. As can be inferred from these explanations, social rights are the rights related to the individual's social and economic activities in a social environment. These rights provide the individual with the right to demand service from the state (Kapani, 1981). In short, these rights oblige the state to serve in compliance with the "social state" concept. Social state is generally described as a state which is interested in the social conditions and welfare of its citizens and esteem warranting a minimum level of life befitting human dignity and worth, as a duty. Accordingly, social state in order to sustain social peace and justice regard it legal and necessary to actively intervene in social and economic life. Besides, realization of the social state principle cannot be merely with social justice and security, in order for the people to get an enough share from the national income, providing national wealth savings and placing importance on rapid development without suppressing the individual are also required from a social state (Soysal, 1969; Özbudun, 1992). Right to protection of family, right to social security, right to employment, right to health and right to education are within the scope of social rights.

In the first international document of human rights, United Nations the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (1948) one can observe that social and economic rights are mentioned even if just a bit (a. 22–27). The social and economic rights which are just arranged in six articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are examined and explained in detail in 1966 dated United Nations the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As it is understood that the international human rights documents which are announced for all the people are not enough for the children, in 1989 United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and thus announced that children are vested some rights just because they are children. CRC is a juridical text which arranges all the rights of the children with an integrated approach. In this convention children are vested with all the rights relevant to general human rights. However, the standards which can be applied to all the people in general terms are tried to be enhanced when it comes to the children (Akyüz, 2000). The social rights which are partaking in CRC are child's right to health (a. 24), right to social security (a. 26) and right to education (a. 28). While the convention obliges the states countries to provide the child with social security, health services and education, it also

rectified the 4th article with the emphasis on the actions to be taken that away should be to the maximum extent of their available resources. States should take all appropriate measures for the implementation of the rights to the maximum extent of their sources and if needed they should apply international co-operation.

According to the 24th article of CRC which organizes the child's right to health, the child has the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and the facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. State countries should ensure that the child is not deprived of access to health facilities. Especially it obliges the states in diminishing infant and child mortality, the provision of necessary medical assistance and within this framework provision of adequate nutritious food and clean drinking water, and ensuring pre-natal and post-natal health care for mothers. Accordingly, ensuring the parents and the children to be informed in child health and nutrition, environmental and public health are also among the duties of the state.

One of the most essential requirements of a child is to be protected against dangers and to be confident about future. However, struggling with poverty and trying to overcome the dangers everyday life confronts one with exceed the limits of the individual's power. The state undertook the responsibility to cope with such problems and thus social security institution has emerged (Akyüz, 2000). According to CRC (a. 26) states must assure that every child's right to benefit from social security, including social insurance, is recognized and every means possible in order to achieve full realization of this right in accordance with their national law is taken.

Also, the right to education is another one of the important social rights of the individual. The development of countries can substantially be possible when all the citizens have the right to education in a qualitatively and quantitatively effective way. For an individual to live in the dignity and worth of the human person, a minimum level of education is necessary. It is the state's duty to provide this minimum education to its citizens. In this framework, social state, by considering education as leading duties of the state, obliged itself to provide everyone in the society with this right for free and to create necessary environment for the people to use this right. While accomplishing these responsibilities, social state should eliminate the possible inequalities among the people (Dural & Zeyrekli, 2008). When considered from a personal angle, right to education plays a key role in the realization, application, improvement and protection of the other rights one has. Briefly, in order for the individual as well as the society to progress, certainly, everyone has to be assured the right to education according to their mental and physical abilities (Karaman-Kepenekci, 2008). According to the 28th article of the CRC; state countries must recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieve this right on the basis of equality. Accordingly, states countries should make the elementary education compulsory and free, encourage the development of different forms of secondary education (including general and vocational education), make higher education and educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all, and take measures to encourage regular attendance to schools. CRC also anticipated the state countries to take all appropriate measures for the school discipline in order not to cause any harm to child's dignity. Besides, promoting and encouraging international co-operation in matters related to education is secured by CRC.

All classes and levels of students, notably the elementary school students, should be informed about their rights which are secured with CRC. For all the students to know, apply, protect and develop these rights, an education on the field is necessary. When approached from the elementary education point of view, especially, within the scope of social studies lessons it is advisable to try to take attention to issues related to social rights and to enhance the knowledge and experience in the field. Textbooks are the basic instruments in the education of students'. According to Power and Allison (2000) textbooks should contribute to the students' personality developments as well as the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Therefore, the programs of the social studies and the textbooks written in the light of these programs should be sufficient in contributing human rights education in general. Yet, until today social studies textbooks' proficiency in educating students about the social rights has not been examined in any research.

2. Purpose

The aim of this work is to present to what extent the social rights of the children are considered in the "Social Studies" (SS) textbooks of the elementary education's 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades which are printed and distributed by the Ministry of National Education.

3. Method

Throughout the work the qualitative research technique is used and all the units of the SS students' textbooks are examined with content analysis method. In the research the analysis unit is determined as "Children's Social Rights". This analysis unit is divided into three sub-categories as "Right to Health", "Right to Social Security" and "Right to Education". In the research, in line with CRC, these sub-categories are defined as follows:

- Right to Health: The scope of this right consists of diminishing infant and child mortality, the provision of necessary medical assistance, provision of adequate nutritious food and clean drinking water, extending the elementary health care services, the prevention of dangers and risks of environmental pollution.
- Right to Education: The scope of this right consists of making elementary education compulsory and free, encouraging every child in secondary education, making higher education available on the basis of capacity, encouraging regular attendance at schools and reduction of drop-out rates, taking appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is consistent with the child's dignity and conformity and promoting international co-operation in matters relating to education.
- Right to Social Security: The scope of this right consists of providing the children who do not have the standards of life to ensure their mental, physical, spiritual, social and moral development with nourishment, sheltering, clothing.

As a unit of context, in the work, sentence is chosen and how often the sub-categories are seen in the sentences is detected. During the enumeration process both the apparent and the hidden content are taken into consideration. In plain words, the words corresponding sub-categories in every sentence, are considered as the sentences or statements defining the stated sub-categories. The significance of every topic is assessed as one point. Categorizing, defining and coding processes are all done by the researcher.

The sub-categories in the book (SS5) which is chosen randomly in order to assure the reliability of the work are re-coded by another educational sciences expert. An average of 88.5% consistency was noted, implying a good inter-rater reliability (Hall & Houten, 1983). In order to assure the validity of the work, the analyzed books are not exposed to sampling and are examined without omitting any parts from them (except the table of contents, bibliography and dictionary). Thus, the measuring instrument, the prerequisite of the validity, is concluded to have measured what it has to measure and so the validity of the work is ensured. Frequency and percentage are used in data analysis.

4. Findings

When social studies textbooks of elementary education are examined as a whole, one can see that statements about social rights are given in close rates in all textbooks. Among all the textbooks, SS6 (%28.0) textbook gives place to statements about social rights most, and respectively followed by SS5 (%25.8), SS4 (%24.0) and SS7 (%22.2) textbooks (Table 1). When one examines the distribution of social rights in SS textbooks of elementary education, in all textbooks statements about the right to health can be observed to be given the utmost place (%50.5), and is followed by statements about the right to education (%47.1), and statements about the right to social security can be observed to be barely given a place (%2.4) (Table 1).

Table 1. The discrimination of the sub-categories in social studies textbooks

| Textbooks | Right to Health | | Sub-Categories Right to Education | | Right to Social Security | | Total | |
|------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Social Studies 4 | 285 | 31.1 | 148 | 17.3 | 2 | 4.5 | 435 | 24.0 |
| Social Studies 5 | 259 | 28.3 | 198 | 23.2 | 11 | 25.0 | 468 | 25.8 |
| Social Studies 6 | 246 | 26.9 | 258 | 30.2 | 4 | 9.1 | 508 | 28.0 |
| Social Studies 7 | 126 | 13.8 | 250 | 29.3 | 27 | 61.4 | 403 | 22.2 |
| Total | 916 | 50.5 | 854 | 47.1 | 44 | 2.4 | 1814 | 100.0 |

4.1. Right to health in social studies textbooks

The statements about right to health are given the utmost place in SS4 (%31.1) textbook. This is followed respectively by SS5 (%28.3), SS6 (%26.9) and SS7 (%13.8) textbooks. The following sentences can be given as examples to the statements about the right to health in the textbooks:

Let's think about it, what do you need in order to maintain a healthy and happy life? Having breakfast, wearing thick clothes in winter... (SS4, p.86)

My health and my protection from diseases are guaranteed by the state. Therefore my nourishment, vaccination and my being in a clean environment are keenly observed. (SS5, p.32)

I know that I have the right to benefit from health services. (SS6, p.157)

By adopting right and balanced diet and food habits protect your health. When you get ill take right pills in the right time and in sufficient amounts... (SS7, p.173)

4.2. Right to education in social studies textbooks

The statements about right to education are given the utmost place in SS6 (%30.2) textbook. This is followed respectively by SS7 (%29.3), SS5 (%23.2) and SS4 (%17.3) textbooks. The following sentences can be given as examples to the statements about the right to education in the textbooks:

It was time to have elementary education... I cannot forget the day when I wore my uniform, took my bag and went to school with my father. (SS4, p.27)

0–6 age is the period when the child progresses most. The education which is to be given to child in this period set the grounds for the success in elementary and secondary education. (SS5, p.22)

I am supported and protected in order to have my education completely. Elementary education is free to all, compulsory for male and female students. (SS5, p.32)

Thanks to the campaign of “Haydi Kızlar Okula” [Girls to School] which is held by the Ministry of National Education many girls started to go to school... (SS6, p.158)

The right to education is guaranteed by our Constitution. State is obliged to meet the educational needs of its citizens by opening up educational institutions... (SS7, p.39)

4.3. Right to social security in social studies textbooks

The statements about right to social security are given the utmost place in SS7 (%61.4) textbook. This is followed respectively by SS5 (%25.0), SS6 (%9.1) and SS4 (%4.5) textbooks. The following sentences can be given as examples to the statements about the right to social security in the textbooks:

He does not know his parents, too. He was raised in a dormitory of Social Services and Child Protection Agency. (SS5, p.23)

Social Services and Child Protection Agency is established in order to serve the families, children, disabled, old and other people who are in need of protection and care. It meets these needs with nurseries... and rehabilitation centers. (SS5, p.23)

As a quintessential of being a social state, with the social institutions it established within the body of the state, it helps the citizens in need. (SS7, p.145)

Some children and elders may be obliged to continue their lives out of their homes under the protection of the state. (SS7, p.145)

5. Discussion

According to the 42nd article of the CRC, “States Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.” In accordance with this provision, children’s awareness is to be raised about the rights which are vested to them by CRC. This kind of awareness can be achieved initially by the textbooks. Because textbooks are the most important assistants of the teacher while giving the course. One of the most important courses of elementary education is social studies which is given only 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades. It is anticipated that this lesson and the textbooks should reflect history, philosophy, geography, law and knowledge of citizenship in order for the individual to realize his/her communal being. Accordingly, in social studies lessons in Turkey, human rights and citizenship issues are presented as an interdisciplinary and the children are aimed to be raised as individuals who know their rights and use them and fulfill their responsibilities. (<http://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/ogretmen/>).

As mentioned above one of the most significant adjustments which secures the rights of the children is CRC and in accordance with the 42nd article of the CRC in order for the child to be aware of his/her rights and responsibilities, children have to be educated via all the textbooks notably the social studies textbooks in accordance with this purpose. As a result of this research which is carried out to see to what extent children’s social rights which is an important component of the rights of children are considered in elementary education social studies textbooks, put forward that these textbooks sufficiently argue the social rights of the children in relation to CRC’s 24th, 26th and 28th articles. Especially the right to health and the right to education which are the basic fundamental rights of the children are observed to be constantly emphasized. In the textbooks, in order to live a healthy life within the scope

of the right to health, the importance of the sufficient and balanced diets, sanity and clothing according to the seasons are mentioned, also the state's responsibility to provide the health care facilities and one's right to benefit from public health care services are emphasized. In relation to right to education, it is frequently emphasized that the elementary education is compulsory and free to all girls and boys in state schools. In addition, the children's necessity to benefit from the right to education in maximum levels in order for them to have a bright future and to take part in their country's development is mentioned emphasizing the state's role in these issues. In social studies textbooks the right to social security is given the least importance. It is only touched upon within the scope of children in need of protection and Social Services and Child Protection Agency's responsibilities.

However, as a consequence of the inquiries, one observes that there is not any research carried out in relation to what extent the social studies textbooks, in Turkey and in abroad, includes the social rights of the children. Therefore, it is necessary to make a further research on the extent of the representation of the social right concept in other textbooks and to compare this research's findings with other future researches'. Moreover, researches should be carried out in all the textbooks of elementary, secondary and higher education, notably the textbooks of social studies, on to what extent children's civil and participation rights are considered besides children's social rights will enable the comparison and contrast among textbooks in relation to giving more importance to children's rights in the textbooks. Finally, as the right to social security is being given the least importance when compared to the right to health and the right to education in social studies textbooks draws attention, it can be suggested that this course's programs and textbooks are to be enriched with attainments and texts which carry messages about the right to social security.

6. Conclusion

The results achieved by the findings of the research can be listed as follows.

- In all the textbooks statements about the right to health and the right to education which are components of social rights are given frequently and in close rates, however, statements about the right to social security are given the least place.
- Among all the textbooks, the statements about the social rights are given the utmost place in SS6 textbook.
- The statements about the right to health are given the utmost place in SS4 textbooks.
- The statements about the right to education are given the utmost place in SS6 textbooks.
- The statements about the right to social security are given the utmost place in SS7 textbooks.

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